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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 001248

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BO](#)  
SUBJECT: KOZULINA APPROACHES AMBASSADOR TO HELP END  
HUSBAND'S HUNGER STRIKE

REF: MINSK 1204

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Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) Ambassador recently meet with Irina Kozulina, wife of hunger striking imprisoned former opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin. Kozulina relayed to Ambassador Kozulin's request that the U.S. raise the GOB's human rights violations at the UN Security Council. She also asked that the Embassy issue a public statement acknowledging receipt of this request so that her husband might end the fast he started on October 20. Expressing the Ambassador's deepest concern for Kozulin's health, we released a statement on December 1 calling for the release of all political prisoners in Belarus. End Summary.

Kozulina and Korol Echo Kozulin's Call for UNSC Debate

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¶2. (C) On November 30, Ambassador met with Irina Kozulina, wife of imprisoned opposition Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Gramada" (BSDP) Chair and former opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin, and BSDP Deputy Chair Aleksey Korol to discuss Kozulin's call for the U.S. and/or other G-8 members to propose discussing GOB human rights violations in the UN Security Council. (Note: Korol informed Ambassador that he and Kozulina had similar meetings with the German and French Embassies in Minsk on November 29.)

¶3. (C) When Kozulina asked whether such Security Council discussions were possible, Ambassador communicated her deepest sympathies for Kozulina and her family but noted that the UN Human Rights Commission and other bodies were the usual venues for such a topic. Ambassador also recalled the recent passage of a U.S.-sponsored resolution on Belarus in the Third Committee and President Bush's statement at the November 28 NATO Summit. (Note: After the meeting, Korol told Poloff that Kozulin believes that raising the possibility of Security Council discussion on Belarus would send a much stronger signal than an actual resolution in other UN bodies.)

Kozulina Pulls Back to Find Way Out of Hunger Strike

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¶4. (C) Seeming to recognize the over-ambitiousness of her husband's request, Kozulina asked Ambassador to issue a public statement simply indicating that the Embassy would

relay to Washington Kozulin's request for Security Council discussions. When Ambassador inquired as to the purpose of such a statement, Kozulina responded that her husband would likely end his hunger strike upon hearing that the U.S. and/or EU governments had formally acknowledged his request. (Note: Kozulin has been on hunger strike since October 20 in protest of the start of President Lukashenko's fraudulently elected third term in office (reftel).)

¶15. (C) Ambassador assured Kozulina that she would discuss possible courses of action with Washington and European heads of mission in Minsk. On December 1, the Embassy released a statement that acknowledged that Ambassador had met with Kozulina about the welfare of her husband and again called for the release of political prisoners, but did not raise UNSC action.

#### Authorities Finally Grant Kozulina Brief Visitation

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¶16. (C) Noting that authorities had finally permitted Kozulina and Kozulin's daughter, Yuliya, to visit Kozulin for 15 minutes at the prison on his birthday, November 25, Kozulina observed that her husband would likely hear about a U.S. Embassy statement because the prison permits him to listen to Radio Liberty in his cell. She added that Kozulin had learned of the Third Committee resolution by radio and expressed his gratitude to the United States.

¶17. (C) When Ambassador inquired about Kozulin's health, Kozulina replied that his body temperature at 36 degrees Celsius and blood pressure at 80/60 were low. Nevertheless, she described him as surprisingly energetic and mentally alert, despite losing over fifty pounds since the start of his hunger strike.

But Continue to Deny Legal Counsel

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¶18. (C) Despite the prison administration's 15 minutes of decency, authorities continue to deny Kozulin contact with his attorney in prison to pressure him to end his hunger strike (reftel). Kozulina related that the prison authorities have further qualified conditions for legal counsel. That is, Kozulin may meet with his attorney only after he had ended his strike and after he has recovered from the effects of his fast.

#### Embassy Again Denied Access to Kozulin

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¶19. (U) In its recent response to the Embassy's November 2 diplomatic note requesting access to Kozulin in prison, the MFA denies Embassy visitation on the grounds that Article 10 of the Criminal Procedural Code only guarantees diplomatic visits with foreigners imprisoned in Belarus. (Note: On October 31, prison authorities permitted OSCE Head of Mission Ambassador Ake Peterson to meet with Kozulin. End note.)

Comment

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¶110. (C) We deeply sympathize with Kozulina's efforts to find a way out of her husband's hunger strike but neither we nor our EU colleagues think can meet her request to call for a UNSC debate. The onus for action on political prisoners should remain on the GOB. Furthermore, we are not certain that Kozulin will end his hunger strike even with such a statement. (Note: OSCE Head of Mission Ambassador Ake Peterson (protect) told Ambassador on December 4 that he had written personally to Kozulin praising his struggle for democracy but urging him now to end his hunger strike for the sake of his future role. End note.)

Stewart